

East Timor symposium: Mauk Moruk

East Timor Fifteen Years On

Paper by Paulino Gama (Mauk Moruk)

Re: Paulino Gama
From: Dr. João Baptista Gama
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I received the invitation to attend this symposium with enormous pleasure and happiness, because it enables me to give you more information about our struggle for self-determination and independence, and at the same time to give you a short account of my experience and contribution as guerrilla commander in the period 1975-1985.

My name is Paulino Gama. I am 35 years old, a widower, father of two children, both dead, as is my wife, who had her throat cut by the Indonesian forces in 1980. I was born in Sae-Lari, East Timor, and am currently a refugee in Portugal, where I arrived on 21 September 1990. My nom de guerre is Mauk Moruk Ran Nakale Lemorai Teki Timor.

I held the post of Operational Commander of the Special Resistance Forces from 1975 to 1985, and in addition, from 1979 I was a member of the political command of the resistance.

After the fall, during the civil war between the UDT and Fretilin, of Batugadé, the last stronghold of the UDT, the Timorese Democratic Union, today an ally of Fretilin in the CNT, the Timorese National Convergence, the advance of the Indonesian elite units and their subsequent violation of our frontiers provoked in all of us, Timorese nationalists of all ideological sympathies, a spontaneous, obstinate and bold resistance against foreign aggression. It is important to stress that the surviving UDT forces joined the National Resistance, which at the time was led by Fretilin, and fought shoulder to shoulder against Indonesian expansionism and colonialism led by the Javanese, who are in reality the power which has made a colony of all Indonesia.

I was operational commander on the border, and since I knew a little English, Nicolau Lobato, then vice-president of Fretilin, gave me the task of accompanying the five Australian journalists, Green Shackleton, Malcolm Rennie, Tony Stewart, Gary Cunningham and Brian Peters, who were killed by Indonesian troops in Balibó between the middle and the end of November 1975. The killing was witnessed by a number of Timorese who were subsequently shot to eliminate all witnesses to this hideous crime against journalists.

At the time I had to take the five journalists' films to Dili, and as a result I was not present at the enemy attack on Balibó during which the five Australian journalists were captured and shot.

The invasion proper took place in October 1975, after the military defeat of the UDT, with the occupation of Batugadé by the Indonesian

troops. At that moment I was at the Balibó forward post with the five journalists.

After the frontier was breached, there was a large-scale invasion, by air, sea and land, on 7 December 1975, of the capital, Dili, and other strategic points in the territory, such as Bauco, Suai, Viqueque, Maliana, Bobonaro, Same and Liquiça.

In the town of Dili there were massacres and executions of the civilian population, including old people, women, children, invalids, and even patients in the Central Hospital and in the Social Welfare building in Caicoli, and there were also many death in Dili harbour, in Vila-Verde, Bidau, Taibessi and other parts of Dili.

In the face of the atrocities committed by the invading forces and taken by surprise, the population and the armed forces made a strategic withdrawal to the mountains in order to organise the resistance for an adequate response to this aggression.

It should be recorded that the forces under my command freed, on 7 December, many UDT and Apodeti brothers who were held prisoner in the Comarca prison and in the security police prisons in Dili, as well as four Indonesian soldiers who had been captured in Nunura, Maliana in October 1975, despite various pressures and the insistence of radical brothers in Fretilin that they should suffer a different fate. Later, in January 1976, the forces under my command freed about 250 Timorese prisoners in Aileu and Same. In Aileu my forces were able to save only about 100 Timorese, after the headquarters had been surrounded and the rifle unit commanded by the former Portuguese army sergeant José da Silva and been neutralised. These prisoners were part of the unit commanded by Lt-Col. Maggiolo Gouveia, a senior officer of the Portuguese army. We arrived too late.

This fact can be confirmed if need be by some of these very UDT ex-prisoners who are at present in Portugal, among them, Sr Manuel Soares. This gesture of mine was misinterpreted by some extremist brothers, who accused me of insubordination and rebellion, and I was pursued on various occasions and in various ways, and there were even attempt to eliminate me physically, merely because I placed human rights and national ideals above party interests. Years later in Matebian, while we still hard support bases, we captured a number of Indonesian soldiers and they remained with us as prisoners of war for over a year. In 1978, when Matebian was surrounded and blown up, many of our soldiers wanted to eliminate them as a reprisal. I, Mauk Moruk, firmly opposed this, and order the prisoners to leave the mountains and join their Javanese brothers who were surrounding Matebian, again influenced by the spirit of humanism.

Years later, in 1985, in Balia and Surabaia in Indonesia, I met some of these soldiers we had captured in September 1977 and whom I had release in November 1978 at the time of the Matebian operation. One of these, Lt Edi of the KKO (Korp Komando Operasi, marines). when he

heard that I was in Surabaya came to see me and when he found me went down on his knees and kissed my foot in a gesture of gratitude to me for saving his life. I mention this fact to stress that we are not murderers, as some people try to depict us, but simply nationalist soldiers defending our country which has been invaded, violated and occupied by the Indonesian armed forces. We further insist that we constantly observed the fundamental principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, such as avoiding arbitrary violence, respect for every human being's right to life, and the safeguarding of the lives and respect for the human dignity of prisoners of war. We place special emphasis on this fact because we are merely fighting against the outdated and backward system of the dictatorial and militaristic government in Jakarta headed by Suharto, and not against the Indonesian people. We are friends and brothers of the Indonesian people, and join in solidarity with all their organisations which oppose the Suharto regime.

From 1975 to 1978 the majority of the population were with us in the bush. During this period the population were the targets of all sorts of barbarism, ranging from bombing raids, murders, massacres and abuses committed by Javanese soldiers throughout East Timor.

This was the most difficult phase of the resistance. We did not have an organisation or structure capable of protecting and supporting hundreds of thousands of brothers, and this created huge obstacles to the mobility of our forces and prevented them responding adequately to the incursions, sweeps and bombardments by the air, naval and land forces of the invaders. We had to organise a logistical structure to meet the nutritional deficiencies of the population. It was rare for crops in the bush to reach maturity because they were systematically destroyed by the enemy's constant incursions. Springs and wells were poisoned on a number of occasions, which increased the difficulty of supply and caused the deaths of many people. This was the period of famine in Timor. It has been documented in various photographs published in various newspapers and magazines, showing children, women and men reduced to skin and bone, half-naked, with a distant look which seems to ask the world why and how it let them reach this state.

The enemy was determined to exterminate the majority of the Timorese people. June to November 1978 was the period of 'Operation Total Encirclement and Destruction'. About 60 battalions were involved in this campaign to surround and destroy the support bases. Biological weapons were used, which caused dysentery, diarrhoea, premature deaths among children, nerve paralysis, rheumatism and also produced sudden fits of madness. Among other agents used was napalm, a weapon which burned everything within a range of 200 metres and another bomb which produced a crater several metres across and several metres deep. These bombs caused many deaths in Matebian. On one occasion an incendiary bomb, perhaps napalm, fell on 27 people, who were reduced to ashes. At another time about 100 people, including children, women and old people who had taken refuge in a cave during an aerial bombardment, were prevented from leaving because a high-explosive bomb exploded at the entrance and

completely blocked it. After two weeks we could no longer hear their groans. The use of napalm was verified by officials of Intel.

As a result of this situation of extreme violence and cruelty many people came down to the towns to surrender. Even in the towns the enemy had no mercy and caused the deaths of more innocent and defenceless people. In Laga, Uatucarabau, Uatulari, Quelicai, Luro, Lospalos, etc., mainly in the areas around Matebian there were many executions and murders. Our mothers, wives, daughters and sisters who surrendered were humiliated and raped. There were cases in which men and women were thrown from helicopters into the open sea; this was later confirmed by the Indonesians themselves. Because of these acts of barbarism many people fled back to the bush, preferring to die fighting rather than be humiliated as human beings and shot like animals.

At the same time is the extermination campaign in the mountains and the bush, the enemy made many arrests and killed many people in the town of Dili. The best known prisons were Comarca, Ataúro, Maliana, Cailaco, Aileu, Ueberec, Ainaro and Tutuala (Lospalos).

It was during this extermination campaign that Nicolau Lobato was killed, in December 1978, and the whole first generation leadership of Fretilin was wiped out.

After the death of Nicolau Lobato and the destruction of the support bases, reorganising the armed resistance became an urgent task for the survivors. Work on the reorganisation plan began in 1979. Among the survivors of the encirclement and destruction of the support bases the most important military figures were Kilik, Mauk Moruk, Ologari, Nelo and Freddy. On the political side the most important were Xanana, Ma Hunu, Mau Hodu, Lere and Txai, who escaped unharmed from the massacre at Ponta Leste. This small politico-military group met in March 1979 at Titilari-Laivai, to analyse the military failure, its causes and consequences, and to devise adequate measures for the reorganisation of the political and military resistance. At this meeting we decided to create the Supreme Struggle Council (the highest organisation of the resistance), which was consolidated at the historic conference at Mabai, Lacluta, in March 1981, when Xanana Gusmao was chosen as leader. After the reorganisation this politico-military team re-established armed resistance over the whole of the national territory.

The second generation of the resistance leadership inside East Timor, headed by Xanana Gusmao, completely abandoned the radicalism and the 'status quo' of 1975 in its tactics and in the political positions it adopted in its conduct of the national liberation struggle. As a consequence of this political line, in March 1983 in Lariguto-Ossú there took place the first negotiations with Indonesia, represented by Colonel Purwanto, operational commander of the Indonesian forces in Timor. The negotiations resulted in a cease-fire which lasted from March to August of that year.

The second encirclement and extermination operation, named Operasi Kikis (search and destroy operation), took place in 1981. About 17 battalions brought from Java were used in this operation in addition to the forces stationed in Timor. There was forced recruitment of [Timorese] men above the age of 15 and even as old as 60 and above to act as a human shield and bearers (TBO). In Lacluta, in the mountains of Aitana, Lalini and Santo António, the enemy slaughtered about 300 Timorese, men women and children. Pregnant women had their stomachs cut open, and sharpened stakes were driven into their vaginas. Children were dashed against trees and rocks. Here the enemy did not bother to pull the trigger, but killed with knives and clubs. Not even household animals escaped the enemy's murderous rage. This group was unable to escape because they did not know the area, being from the eastern end of the territory.

In 1982 there was a new sweep operation with about five battalions. This operation did not result in casualties either among the resistance forces or the civilian population in the bush.

In 1983, after the breakdown of the cease-fire agreed at the March talks, the enemy slaughtered over 3000 people in Krarás, Viqueque, in reprisal for the killing of 17 Indonesian soldiers. The massacre took place in August 1983, and was confirmed by a special investigating team of the resistance in September of the same year. We counted the heads in the two big buffalo pens of the liurai of Uma-Tolo, Lacluta beside the river Uetuku: there were about 3000 decomposing skulls. At another place, Taci-Tolu, hundreds of Timorese were shot by firing squad... as a reprisal for the killing of these same 17 soldiers. The victims included the resistance team which made contact with the Australian parliamentary delegation led by Senator Bill Morrison. The team was twelve strong and headed by my cousin, Cândio de Sousa Gama.

We want dialogue. The military option is simply a response to aggression. We know that only dialogue can solve conflicts between peoples and nations. Dialogue brings peoples together in peace, harmony and love.

The most rational and practical way to achieve a just, dignified and honourable solution to the issue of East Timor is dialogue between the interested parties, Indonesia, Timor and Portugal, the administering power which can under no circumstances be excluded from any agreement or peace treaty. Such a peace treaty will have to maintain the right of Portugal to return as administering power to resume and complete the process of decolonisation tragically interrupted by the Indonesian military invasion. The decolonisation process could be based on Law 7/75 with the necessary modifications to suit the circumstances of its application.

We Timorese are now more united than ever around the project of national unity embodied in the CNT, the Timorese Nationalist Convergence, which combines the UDT and Fretilin.

Since 1987 Falintil, in the national interest, has been the Armed Forces of National Liberation, and has ceased to serve party interests and become a genuinely national and non-party army. Xanana Gusmao himself left the Fretlin leadership to show the world that the resistance is national. Xanana Gusmao is the figure who produces consensus among all Timorese, of whatever political sympathies.

External influences on the struggle

In the bush we received news of the outside world through Radio Netherlands, the Voice of America, the Voice of Federal Germany, Radio Australia and the BBC. It is worth noting that the stations which carry most news about Timor are Radio Australia and the BBC.

The first foreign report on the situation, from the church, was made by Fr Francisco Maria Fernandes, a Timorese priest refugee in Australia, speaking on Radio Australia in June 1979. It was a stimulus and a moral support for the guerrillas. This long-awaited and badly needed moral support raised our spirits and gave us courage to carry on the liberation struggle. Later many other organisations and individuals sent messages of support for our cause. It has been evident recently that Radio Australia has been coming under pressure from its government over its reporting of Timor, perhaps because the governments of Canberra and Jakarta have close relations and common economic interests.

As regards the Fretilin mission abroad, we only received its messages from 1982 onwards. The period 1978 to 1982 was one of total silence. Even so our determination to fight against the Indonesian occupiers was unshakable.

East Timor must be free and independent: anything else means our extermination as a people and a nation. There have now been fifteen years of physical and cultural genocide imposed on the people of East Timor by the disgusting and barbarous Indonesians.

The invasion and military occupation of East Timor by the inhuman Indonesian troops has been characterised by:

- a) open violation of international law;
- b) gross disrespect for the universal rules and relevant resolutions of the United Nations;
- c) the permanent threat of the elimination of the identity and dignity of the people of East Timor;
- d) the intransigent denial of the fundamental right to self-determination and independence.

In view of all I have said I appeal to all freedom-loving countries, especially the United States of America, England, France, China, and the USSR, to bring pressure to bear on Indonesia to withdraw its forces from East Timor.

The great nations of the world cannot have a double standard for identical situations. The problem of Kuwait is a mirror image of the problem of East Timor. In the case of Kuwait the United States and the whole Western world, including the USSR, chorused a condemnation of Iraq's invasion. In the case of East Timor the United States did not lift a finger to force their ally Indonesia to end its oppression of our people and leave our land free and independent in accordance with the wishes of its people and in accordance with international law and the United Nations Charter.

I appeal to the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council, the United States, the United Kingdom, France, the USSR and China, to act in conformity with the principles of the Charter they have signed and in accord with international law.

I make a special appeal to these five states to respect and secure the implementation of the Security Council resolutions which call for the total withdrawal of the Indonesian armed forces from East Timor and strongly condemn the invasion. We, the Timorese people, are not asking for much; we are not asking the Security Council to approve the use of force to make Indonesia withdraw from our country. We are merely appealing to the Security Council to bring pressure on Indonesia to make an dignified withdrawal from East Timor.

Here in this symposium I appeal for the creation of an office of the Jesuit Refugee Service in Asia-Pacific in Timor to help in reducing the suffering of the people of Timor.

I would finally like to thank you all for your attention and for the constant support and solidarity you have given the suffering people of East Timor.

We can never repeat often enough that the only just, dignified and honourable solution for East Timor is self-determination and independence.

Thank you very much for listening to me.

London, 7 December 1990

Paulino Gama

nom de guerre: MAUK MORUK Ran Nakale Lemorai Teki Timor.